



FOREWORD

The United States Soccer Federation adopts the procedures outlined in this pamphlet in order to standardize officiating techniques, signals, and mechanics at all levels of play. They have been recommended by a panel of senior referees and instructors and have been thoroughly tested at international, professional, adult, and youth levels of competition.

Alternate signals, procedures, and methods of communication among referees and assistant referees are not authorized for games under the jurisdiction of the United States Soccer Federation using the diagonal system of control. Other signals or methods of communication intended to supplement those described here are permitted only if they do not conflict with established procedures and only if they do not intrude on the game, are not distracting, are limited in number and purpose, and are carefully described by the referee prior to the commencement of a match.

Standard procedures and mechanics for fourth officials are fully described in the Federation's Guide for Fourth Officials (2001).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfred Kleinaitis'.

Alfred Kleinaitis

Manager of Referee Development and Education

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GENERAL MECHANICS



- It is the job of the referee and assistant referees to perform their responsibilities as efficiently, effectively, and unobtrusively as possible.

While every official must develop his or her own style of conduct, it is the objective of this Guide to Procedures to keep such individual styles within a common boundary of standard practices.

- An official's style should not interfere with the flow of the game, result in unclear communication of information to players or fellow officials, or cause undue attention to be drawn to the official and away from the match itself.

- Whistle

- ◆ Referees are reminded that the whistle is a tool of communication and not merely a convenient signaling device. Whistles should be selected carefully for the match conditions, age of players, and other factors. It is neither required nor expected that the whistle be used for all stoppages and restarts of play.
- ◆ A whistle demands attention and should be blown when such attention is needed. Uncontested stoppages (as when a ball clearly leaves the field) should not be whistled — a voice and/or hand signal by the referee or a flag by the assistant referee will normally be sufficient.
- ◆ Referees should also be alert to the need for variations in the length, force, and tone of their use of a whistle to indicate different types of stoppages or different degrees of concern for the event that has just occurred.

- In the diagonal system of control, referees should take every opportunity of less activity on the field to make eye contact with each of the assistant referees, to confirm the location of players relative to the officials, and to observe portions of the field which may not have received recent attention.

- Signals

All referee hand signals are given with the arm straight at the indicated angle or direction, with the fingers fully extended.



Assistant referee flag signals follow the same pattern with the flag held as an extension of the arm.



GENERAL MECHANICS



- Referees should be aware that various hand or arm gestures and facial expressions can have unintended, negative meanings in matches involving multicultural participants. Care should be taken therefore in the use of such gestures or expressions.
- Administrative tasks before, during, and after the match are the responsibility of the referee but can be delegated by the referee to other members of the officiating team: examples include assisting with inspection of the field, the game balls, player equipment, player credentials, correction of illegal equipment or bleeding, etc.
- All members of the officiating team must understand their respective responsibilities, tasks, and duties. Each official must be able to rely upon the other members of the team to perform their duties in a timely, accurate, and responsible manner. In turn, each official should be given full opportunity to perform the tasks described in this Guide and in the pre-game conference.
- The procedures and mechanics which follow may be revised, as appropriate, in accordance with the *Guide for Fourth Officials* for matches in which a fourth official has been appointed.



GAME MECHANICS



PRIOR TO THE GAME

Arrival At The Field

- Referee and assistant referees are expected to be at the field at the time prescribed by the rules of competition, but at least 30 minutes prior to kick off

Inspections and Instructions

- Referee carefully inspects field to determine adequacy of markings, safety, and general playing conditions
- Referee obtains and inspects the game balls
- Referee inspects player equipment, uniforms, player passes, and team rosters
- Referee discusses with ball handlers (if provided) their duties and procedures
- Referee may delegate any portion of the above inspections or instructions to the assistant referees



Pre-Game Conference

- Referee and assistant referees discuss any special expectations, unusual field or match conditions, special rules of competition (e.g., substitutions, ties), and signals or procedures other than those described in this Guide

Fifteen Minutes Before Kick-off

- Referee resolves all issues of questionable equipment, uniform, or credentials

Prior To Kick-off

- Referee and assistant referees enter field together and move to center mark for National Anthem and other pre-game ceremonies
- Referee carries match ball, introduces officiating team to captains, and conducts coin toss
- Assistant referees have flags furled
- Officials record results of coin toss
- Assistant referees perform final check of nets and move to touch lines to take the kick-off position





GAME MECHANICS



One Minute Before Kick-off

- Assistant referees unfurl flags and hold them straight down in view of the referee to signal readiness to start (correct number of players, clearly identified goalkeeper, etc.)

Thirty Seconds Before Kick-off

- Referee supervises the clearing of the field
- Referee makes eye contact with each assistant referee to ensure readiness

KICK-OFF

Referee

- Referee reads the players' positioning to determine exactly where to stand, starts watch, and signals for the kick-off to be taken

Assistant Referee

- Assistant referees are in position with the second to last defender



GAME MECHANICS



DURING PLAY

GENERAL POSITIONING

Referee

- Position flexible, using the diagonal system of control
- Referee's discretion on choice of diagonal and degree of flexibility
- Able to observe active play and lead assistant referee
- Remain close enough to observe important aspects of play without interfering with player or ball movement

Assistant Referee

- In line with second to last defender or the ball, whichever is closer to the goal line
- Flag held straight down and always visible to referee
- Side-to-side movement, square to the field, unless speed is needed
- Before signaling, stops, faces field, and makes eye contact with referee

GOALKEEPER POSSESSION/PUNT

Referee

- Able to observe where the ball is anticipated to drop

Assistant Referee

- Verifies the goalkeeper does not handle the ball outside of the penalty area
- Follows the ball up field to cover offside (may begin moving earlier if obvious that the goalkeeper is not in a position to handle the ball outside the penalty area)



GAME MECHANICS



THROW-IN

Referee's End Of Touch Line

Referee

- Signals stoppage of play (whistle only if necessary)
- Points 45 degrees upward to indicate direction of throw-in
- Indicates correct location for restart
- Variable position, including where needed being ahead of the throw-in and off the field (over the touch line or goal line) if location is deep or throw is expected to be long



Assistant Referee

- If ball passes out of play and immediately returns to the field, signals with a vertical flag in the hand indicating the direction of the restart, then drops the flag when acknowledged by the referee
- Does not signal otherwise unless the referee makes obvious eye contact to request assistance with possession on the throw-in, in which case the signal is used which is agreed to in the pre-game conference



GAME MECHANICS



THROW-IN

Assistant Referee's End Of Touch Line

Referee

- Whistles to stop play only if necessary, points in direction of throw-in only if correction or confirmation of assistant referee's signal is needed

Assistant Referee

- Signals with flag 45 degrees upward in the direction of the throw-in
- If the ball passes out of play and immediately returns to the field, signals with a vertical flag until acknowledged by the referee, then flags in the direction of the throw-in
- Drops flag when it is clear that restart and direction are established
- If the referee does not see it, maintains the signal in accordance with the pre-game conference
- Moves to the second to last defender, unless this is the thrower, in which case moves slightly downfield from the thrower until the ball is in play
- Supervises throw-in elements per pre-game conference





GAME MECHANICS



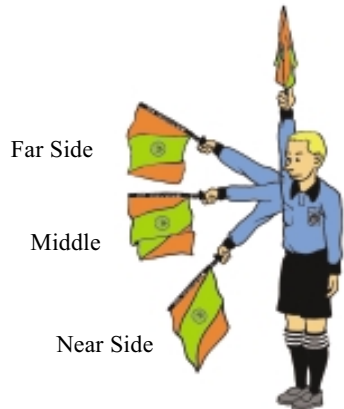
OFFSIDE

Referee

- Acknowledges the assistant referee's signal by stopping play or by waving down the flag to indicate play should continue
- If offside is called, gives an indirect free kick signal when it is appropriate to do so and indicates the restart
- Holds the indirect free kick signal from the moment of the restart to when the ball is touched or played by another player or until play is stopped for another reason

Lead Assistant Referee

- Raises the flag vertically
- If the referee misses the flag, stays at attention with the flag raised until the defense gains clear possession or until a goal kick or throw-in is awarded to the defense
- After making eye contact with the referee, indicates the location of the offense by dropping the flag at an appropriate angle to a point in the field (far, middle, near side)





GOAL KICK

Referee

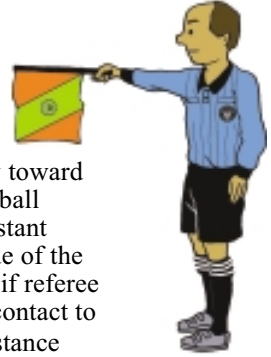
- Signals stoppage of play (whistle only if necessary) if ball crosses referee's side of the goal line
- Points to the goal area



- Takes a position down the field near where the ball is likely to be played

Assistant Referee

- Points flag horizontally toward goal area if ball crosses assistant referee's side of the goal line or if referee makes eye contact to ask for assistance
- If the ball passes out of play and immediately returns to the field, signals with a vertical flag until acknowledged by the referee, then points flag horizontally toward goal area
- Moves to top of goal area to check for proper placement of ball
- Moves to top of penalty area, when needed, to verify that ball is properly put into play and that attackers do not encroach into penalty area
- If the keeper is taking the goal kick, moves to a position to judge offside





GAME MECHANICS



CORNER KICK

Referee's Side Of Field

Referee

- Signals stoppage of play (whistle only if necessary)
- Points to the correct corner
- Ensures that the ball is properly placed within the corner arc
- Enforces the required distance if necessary



Assistant Referee

- Signals only if referee makes eye contact to ask for assistance
- Moves to the near corner and takes position on the goal line behind the flag
- If the ball passes out of play and immediately returns to the field, signals with a vertical flag until acknowledged by the referee, then points flag 45 degrees downward toward the near corner
- Steps upfield from goal line to avoid pointing the flag off the field

CORNER KICK

Assistant Referee's Side Of Field

Referee

- Signals stoppage of play (whistle only if necessary)
- Points 45 degrees upward toward the correct corner
- Enforces the required distance if necessary



Assistant Referee

- Raises the flag vertically to get the referee's attention in cases where the ball left the field and quickly returned
- Points the flag 45 degrees downward in the direction of the near corner
- Steps upfield from goal line to avoid pointing the flag off the field
- Ensures that the ball is properly placed
- Takes a position even with the goal line, out of the way of players
- Assists with enforcing the required distance based on pre-game conference
- Following the kick, recovers the offside position as quickly as possible





GAME MECHANICS



GOAL

Referee

- Checks visually with the assistant referee
- Points upfield to the center circle
- Backpedals toward center circle and keeps players under observation
- Prevents unnecessarily prolonged celebration
- Intervenes quickly in situations in which players or bench personnel attempt to confront assistant referees
- Records goal when in position for kick-off
- Makes eye contact with both assistant referees before signaling for the kick-off to occur

Lead Assistant Referee

- Checks visually with the referee
- Runs a short distance up the touch line toward the halfway line to affirm that a goal has been scored
- Keeps moving to avoid confrontation if approached
- Observes the resulting player behavior and the actions in and around the penalty area
- Takes up the position for a kick-off
- Keeps players under observation at all times
- Records the goal after the trail assistant referee has recorded it

Trail Assistant Referee

- Records the goal while the referee and lead assistant referee are returning to their positions for the restart
- Observes players while the referee and lead assistant referee make notes
- Keeps moving to avoid confrontation if approached

GOAL

Ball Comes Back Into Field Of Play

Referee

- Looks to the assistant referee for assistance

Lead Assistant Referee

- Raises the flag vertically to get the referee's attention
- When the referee stops play, puts flag straight down, runs a short distance up the touch line toward the halfway line
- Follows the remaining mechanics for a goal





GAME MECHANICS



APPARENT GOAL

To Be Disallowed

Referee

- Checks visually with the assistant referee
- Decides on action after considering information from the assistant referee
- Signals the correct restart
- Goes to the appropriate referee position for this restart
- Intervenes quickly to prevent attempts by players or others to confront an assistant referee

Lead Assistant Referee

- Stands in place
- Signals the referee according to the situation
 - * If the *scorer was offside* at the moment the ball was passed to him or her, ***signals offside***
 - * If there was a *foul by an attacker*, stands at ***attention with the flag held straight down at the side***
 - * If a player *other than the scorer was in an offside position* and, in the opinion of the assistant referee, was *interfering with play or with an opponent*, stands at ***attention with the flag held straight down at the side***
 - * Assumes the proper position for the restart indicated by the referee



GAME MECHANICS



FOULS

Observed By Referee

Referee

- Stops the game with a whistle
- Moves to the spot of the foul if necessary to prevent possible retaliation or misconduct
- Makes eye contact with the lead assistant referee if needed for assistance with determining if a defender *inside the penalty area* committed the infringement
- Indicates the direction of the free kick
- Ensures that the ball is properly placed
- Allows a quick free kick, without the necessity of a separate signal, except where this is prevented or interfered with by an opponent's failure to respect the required distance
- Prevents the restart from occurring if a card must be shown for misconduct
- In cases where the restart is interfered with, clearly indicates that a separate signal is now required for the restart and then deals with the interference
- If the kick is indirect, gives the appropriate hand signal for the restart and holds the hand signal until the ball has been touched or played by another player or goes out of play

Lead Assistant Referee

- Responds to eye contact by the referee requesting assistance regarding the location of the foul either by standing with the flag held clearly downward at the side (to indicate that the infringement occurred outside the penalty area)



or...

by holding the flag straight downward in front of the body (to indicate that the infringement was committed by the defense inside its penalty area)



- Per pre-game conference, assists in enforcing the required distance
- For free kicks within scoring distance, takes position requested by referee in pre-game conference (to cover offside or as goal judge)



GAME MECHANICS



FOULS

Not Seen By The Referee But Indicated By Lead Assistant Referee

Referee

- Acknowledges the assistant referee's signal by stopping play, calling advantage, or waving down the signal to indicate that play should continue
- If play is stopped for the foul, indicates the direction of the free kick and ensures that the free kick is taken properly
- Confers with assistant referee, if necessary, to confirm the nature of the infringement, the possibility of a prior infringement, or additional misconduct (keeps field in view while moving to touch line and while conferring)

Lead Assistant Referee

- Determines that the infringement was not or could not be seen by the referee and that, per the pre-game conference, the referee would likely have stopped play for the infringement if it had been seen
- Signals with the flag raised vertically in the hand appropriate for the restart direction and, upon making eye contact with the referee, gives the flag a slight wave
- If the referee stops play, signals with the flag held 45 degrees upward in the direction of the restart if the foul was committed by any player outside of the penalty area or by an attacker inside the penalty area
- Indicates the location of the restart if necessary
- If the referee does not see the signal, continues to hold the flag straight upward in accordance with the pre-game conference
- Per pre-game conference, assists in enforcing the minimum distance
- For free kicks within scoring distance, takes position requested by referee in pre-game conference (to cover offside or as goal judge)



Trail Assistant Referee

- If the referee does not see the lead assistant referee's signal, the trail assistant referee mirrors the flag signal and, upon making eye contact with the referee, directs his attention to the lead assistant referee



GAME MECHANICS



FOULS/MISCONDUCT

Indicated By Trail Assistant Referee

Referee

- Stops the game with a whistle
- Confers with the trail assistant referee, if necessary, to determine nature of the occurrence; while moving to confer, referee keeps field in view
- Deals with the incident as appropriate
- Indicates the location and direction of the restart
- Signals for the restart and ensures that the free kick is taken properly

Trail Assistant Referee

- Determines that the infringement was not or could not be seen by the referee and that, per the pre-game conference, the referee would likely have stopped play for the infringement if it had been seen
- Signals with the flag raised vertically in the hand appropriate for the restart direction and, upon making eye contact with the referee, gives the flag a slight wave
- If the referee stops play, signals with the flag held 45 degrees upward in the direction of the restart if the foul was committed by any player outside of the penalty area or by an attacker inside the penalty area
- If the referee does not see the signal, continues to hold the flag straight upward in accordance with the pre-game conference
- For free kicks within scoring distance, takes position requested by referee in pre-game conference (to cover offside or as goal judge)

Lead Assistant Referee

- If the referee does not see the trail assistant referee's signal, the lead assistant referee mirrors the flag signal and, upon making eye contact with the referee, directs his attention to the trail assistant referee



GAME MECHANICS



PLAY ON

Advantage Applied

Referee

- Declares distinctly “Play on!” or “Advantage!” and moves both hands forward in a sweeping motion at waist level
- Avoids an advantage signal when an incident has been observed which is judged not to be a foul (or a trifling or doubtful foul)



Assistant Referee

- In the case of fouls or misconduct not seen by the referee, determines whether the referee would not have applied advantage and stopped play for the offense if it had been seen (keeps flag down and does not use the verbal/hand signal for advantage)
- Brings the the referee’s attention at the next stoppage or other convenient time any serious offenses on which the referee should act in some way but for which the assistant referee did not signal at the time the offense occurred



GAME MECHANICS



PENALTY KICK

Referee

- Whistles to stop play
- Points clearly to the penalty mark and, unless needed elsewhere for game control purposes, moves to the edge of the penalty area near the goal line to avoid confrontation and dissent



- Deals with players who may attempt to protest or dispute the decision
- Supervises the placement of the ball
- Identifies the kicker
- Moves to a position in line with the top of the goal area to supervise the penalty kick, far enough from the penalty mark to see all the players
- When the ball and all the players are properly in position, signals for the kick to be taken
- If a goal is scored, backpedals quickly up field keeping the area in front of the goal and other players under observation
- If a goal is not scored, quickly takes a position appropriate for restart or next play of the ball

Lead Assistant Referee

- Waits for the referee to begin supervising the restart and then moves quickly to the intersection of the goal line and the penalty area line to prepare for the duties assigned by the referee in the pre-game conference
- If a goal is scored, keeps players under observation and follows the normal goal procedure
- If play continues, quickly resumes the position to judge offside (cutting the corner of the field if necessary) and keeps play in view

Trail Assistant Referee

- Moves up the touch line to near the midfield line and monitors player activities out of the view of the referee
- If a goal is not scored, quickly takes a position appropriate for the next phase of play



PENALTY KICK

Indicated By The Assistant Referee

Referee

- Stops the game
- Points clearly to the penalty mark
- Follows the normal procedures for a penalty kick
- Quickly intervenes to prevent and control player attempts to confront the assistant referee regarding the decision

Assistant Referee

- Determines that the direct free kick foul by a defender inside the penalty area was not seen by the referee and that, per the pre-game conference, the referee would likely have stopped play for the foul if it had been seen
- Signals with a flag straight up
- Upon making eye contact with the referee, gives the flag a slight wave
- If referee stops game, assistant referee begins walking toward the corner flag
- Takes the appropriate position either for the penalty kick if confirmed by the referee or for the next phase of play if the referee orders a different restart



MISCONDUCT

Play Stopped Immediately

Referee

- Quickly identifies and begins moving toward offending player and beckons player to approach
- Attempts to draw offending player away from teammates and opponents
- Discourages others from approaching, interfering, or participating
- Stops a reasonable distance away from offending player and begins recording necessary information
- States clearly and concisely that the player is being cautioned or sent from the field and displays the appropriate card by holding it straight overhead
- If the player is being sent off, delays the restart of play until the player has left the field entirely
- In situations where the event or conduct being penalized includes the potential for retaliation or further misconduct, immediately moves to the location of the misconduct and displays the appropriate card before recording any information

Assistant Referees

- Prevent others on or off the field from interfering with the referee's procedures
- Record any pertinent information to assist with subsequent reporting of the misconduct
- Monitor the departure from the field of a player sent off





GAME MECHANICS



MISCONDUCT

Play Not Stopped Immediately

Referee

- Gives the advantage signal (verbal and arms swept upward to waist) and, if possible, identifies the player who has committed misconduct
- At the next stoppage, whether caused by the ball leaving the field or by the decision of the referee,
 - * Directs the attacking team to wait for a signal before the restart, returns to the player who committed misconduct and follows the appropriate procedure **or**
 - * Allows the restart to occur quickly without displaying the yellow card for a caution if the misconduct was committed by a player on the team which does not have possession on the restart and if, in the opinion of the referee, the attacking team would benefit from the quick restart

Assistant Referee

- Takes note of the player identified by the referee and, if necessary or requested by the referee, provides additional information regarding the misconduct at the next stoppage of play



GAME MECHANICS



SUBSTITUTIONS

Referee

- Indicates that the restart will be delayed for the substitution and cannot occur except by the referee's signal (whistle only if necessary)
- When the player has left the field, beckons on the substitute
- Adds time as appropriate for excessive delay in performing the substitution
- Does not permit the substitution if the substitute is not prepared to enter the field or if the team in possession on the restart is prepared to restart quickly

Assistant Referee

- Gives the substitution signal and holds it until eye contact is made with the referee
- Other assistant referee mirrors the signal if the referee is not looking in the necessary direction, directs the referee's attention to the opposite side of the field when eye contact is made
- When acknowledged by the referee, lowers the flag
- Moves to the halfway line to supervise, based on the pre-game conference
- Ensures that the substitute does not enter the field until the player being replaced has left the field
- Checks equipment, uniform, and credentials if the substitute was not present at the start of the match
- Assists the referee in determining when the substitution is complete based on the pre-game conference



TIMING

Referee

- Makes eye contact with assistant referees for indication
- Confirms the assistant referee's signal and/or indicates additional time if near the end of the half

Assistant Referee

- Indicates time within the last 5 minutes with appropriate number of fingers pointing downward against the background of the shorts
- Displays closed fist on the shorts if time has expired
- If the referee might have difficulty seeing a signal against the shorts, signals instead against the jersey across the chest



GAME MECHANICS



END OF GAME

Referee

- Signals with the whistle
- Points up field to the center circle
- Secures the game ball
- Supervises the departure of the teams from the field

Assistant Referee

- May secure the game ball if closer to it than the referee
- Join the referee on the field
- Flags are furled

Referee and Assistant Referees

- Keep players and team officials under observation at all times
- Leave the field as a team after the teams have departed or have otherwise ceased all competitive activities
- Confer as a team regarding reportable events occurring during the match, clarify and confirm the accuracy of all reportable facts (e.g., goals scored, identity of players shown cards, other unusual incidents, etc.), and assist in the timely preparation and submission of all necessary reports

